

# New England HOME

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# One for the Ages

A family retreat on New Hampshire's Lake Winnepesaukee is designed to stand the test of time—and a lot of sandy little feet.

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At the end of a long day on the lake, a circle of custom-made club chairs beckons the adult members of the family. "We get the kids to bed, and it's a nice way to say, 'We did it,'" the homeowner notes. **FACING PAGE:** Japanese tree lilacs mark the path to the gabled front entry.





For a Maryland couple and their six children, vacations on Lake Winnepesaukee have always revolved around simple pleasures: swimming and fishing, driving the boat to town for ice cream, gathering around the campfire. When they first began visiting Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, some thirty years ago, “we really loved the charm and character, like a little Norman Rockwell town,” says the matriarch of the family. “The kids had a new sense of freedom here, learning how to do all kinds of water activities.”

So when it came time to rebuild their vacation house to accommodate the next generation—fourteen grandchildren and counting—keeping with tradition was at the top of the homeowners’ list. One glimpse of architect Patrick Ahearn’s portfolio and they knew they’d found a kindred spirit. “He has a true eye for that classic New England charm,” says the wife.



The breakfast room’s floor tiles and high-performance fabrics can hold their own against wet bathing suits. **FACING PAGE:** Beautifully detailed ceilings extend from the entryway to define various spaces in the great room, including the seating area around the stone fireplace. Throughout the home, touches like weathered oars and antique water skis conjure the past. “They call Wolfeboro the oldest summer resort in America,” the homeowner says. “We’re trying to keep that idea alive.”



#### PROJECT TEAM

**Architecture:** Patrick Ahearn, Patrick Ahearn Architect

**Interior design:** Brooke Wagner, Brooke Wagner Design

**Builder:** Kevin Beland, Wood & Clay

**Landscape design:** Eric R. Buck, Terrain Planning & Design

A timeless look wasn’t all these hands-on grandparents were after. “They wanted a family homestead that was fairly tailored but still very fun, with a casual lake-house attitude,” Ahearn says. As one of two homes on the property, “the cove house,” as it’s known, needed to sleep half the family and seat the entire gang for nightly dinners. (The couple acquired the other home, “the point house,” when an adjacent piece of lakefront property came up for sale, and connected the two with a woodland path.) And of course, capturing water views was a priority.

The architect delivered, pairing a classic shingle-

and-stone facade with a more contemporary floor plan. Even at more than 7,000 square feet, the house manages to project a cottage-like appeal as you turn into the driveway. “The gables give the vision of hearth and home,” Ahearn explains. “The push and pull of the gables in a rhythm, along with the elongated covered porch, really tames the house.” Details like dark shutters, antique copper coach lights, and flower boxes overflowing with blooms all convey the idea of a traditional New England summer.

The rocking chairs on the front porch, alas, are a bit of a tease. When the grandkids are in residence,





the homeowner jokes, “If you have a chance to scoot away and sit for five minutes, you’re really lucky. We’re what we call organized chaos.”

While good design may not eliminate the challenges of vacationing with young children, this house’s interior comes close. Ahearn joined forces with designer Brooke Wagner, a longtime friend of the family, to create spaces that are as serene and sophisticated as they are kid-friendly. The front doors open onto the great room, with its expansive lake views, crisp millwork, and highly detailed ceilings. Against this backdrop, Wagner arranged furniture groupings that float in the space—notably, a circle of cheerful striped club chairs that sit just inside the entry—favoring custom pieces in an understated palette of blues and neutrals.

“The architecture is the architecture, and the furniture is complementary; they’re not fighting with each other,” Ahearn says of his harmonious collaboration with Wagner. “I brought the New England aesthetic, and she brought the California aesthetic, and we really blended the two together.”

Architect Patrick **Ahearn** joined forces with designer Brooke **Wagner** to create spaces that are as **serene and sophisticated** as they are kid-friendly.

The dining room is a prime example of the home’s easygoing elegance. There, Wagner coupled a clean-lined table and chairs with a hefty custom-fabricated chandelier, a neutral textured rug, and an antique credenza in a weathered gray finish that the homeowner spotted in an antique store.

Upstairs, two spacious bedroom suites are outfitted with custom linens in soothing shades of blue; their walk-in closets serve as impromptu nurseries, where parents can set up a portable crib. Three additional bedrooms and a nautical-themed bunkroom paneled in bleached wood round out the accommodations. Before bed, the kids can select a book from the reading room, which features a dramatic cupola and commanding views of the lake from a bank of cozy window seats.

The kitchen easily accommodates a crowd, with its floor-to-ceiling cabinetry and two massive quartzite-topped islands with full sinks. Barstools and breakfast-room chairs wear high-performance fabrics,



and a wood-look stone floor makes a more durable counterpart to the fumed oak found elsewhere in the house. “If people come in soaking wet, it’s just not going to hurt anything,” the wife says. “That is the last thing I want to worry about in a summer home. I want everyone to feel relaxed and enjoy.”

The home’s exterior is equally sturdy, built to withstand harsh northern winters. The couple worked with contractor Kevin Beland to achieve an authentic look with materials that won’t rot or mildew, including Azek trim and NuCedar shingles. “I don’t want them to have to worry about maintenance,” says Beland, whose firm has been building in the Lakes Region for four decades. “Vacation houses

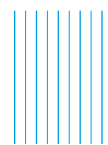
**ABOVE:** With two spacious islands and ample storage, the kitchen “is meant to hold and feed a lot of people,” says interior designer Brooke Wagner. **FACING PAGE:** In the dining room, Wagner took a more contemporary tack, opting for clean-lined furniture in driftwood shades.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Exterior details like the eyebrow windows have a classic look while providing volume inside the house. Beyond the boathouse, the second home on the property peeks through the trees. The shingles and trim are engineered materials, but, says builder Kevin Beland, "even when they touch it, some people don't know." The porch floors, however, are cumaru, a Brazilian hardwood.







“We like to think of it as a **summer camp**,” says the homeowner, a place that **fosters togetherness**, cooperation, and **daring leaps** off the boathouse roof.



**LEFT:** “She has a great aesthetic,” says Wagner of the homeowner, who helped select the fabrics in each room, including the robin’s-egg accents in this bedroom suite. **BELOW:** The bunkroom features cozy berths for eight kids. **FACING PAGE:** The second-floor reading room offers comfortable seating, endless water views, and plenty of good books in shelves opposite the windows.

are supposed to be fun.”

Considering that the family is outside most of the day—mornings are devoted to water sports, while afternoons are typically spent biking, scootering, and skateboarding—the contributions of landscape architect Eric Buck were key. For the ornamental gardens near the house, he specified summer-flowering perennials such as lilies, coneflowers, and twelve varieties of hydrangea, the homeowners’ favorite.

Pathways and patios are constructed of New England fieldstone, bluestone, and granite; Buck designed large landings on the path down to the lake, making it easier to navigate for young and old alike. At the shore, a buffer of indigenous plants like blueberries, native dogwood, and sweet fern helps support the existing vegetation.

“We like to think of it as a summer camp,” the homeowner says of the meticulously designed property—a place that fosters togetherness, cooperation, and daring leaps off the boathouse roof. On Sunday afternoons, everyone gathers on the lawn for an inspirational message, focusing on values like kindness and honesty. For this close-knit family, inner beauty is what matters most, but they certainly don’t mind that their treasured retreat is lovely both inside and out. **»»»**

**RESOURCES:** For more information about this home, see page 260.

